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Letter dated 4 April 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon the instructions of my Government, I have the honour to enclose herewith the remarks of Serzh Sargsyan, President of Armenia, delivered on 4 April 2016 at the meeting with ambassadors of the participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (see annex), in connection with the pre-planned and unprecedented provocation along the entire line of contact with Nagorno-Karabakh, undertaken by Azerbaijan since 2 April, in which it carried out massive military actions with the employment of their entire arsenal: armoured vehicles, heavy artillery and air force.

I kindly request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Zohrab **Mnatsakanyan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

16-06591 (E) 260416

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Annex to the letter dated 4 April 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Opening remarks by Serzh Sargsyan, President of the Republic of Armenia, at the meeting with the ambassadors of the participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to provide them with information regarding the situation on the line of contact

4 April 2016, Yerevan

I appreciate your quick response to my invitation and thank you for being here. I am confident that all of you are informed about the situation on the Nagorno-Karabakh line of contact. The purpose of inviting the ambassadors of the participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is to provide you with first-hand information.

As you already know, over the night of 2 April 2016, at around 3 a.m., the Azeri side undertook a pre-planned and unprecedented provocation along the entire line of contact with Nagorno-Karabakh, carrying out massive military actions and employing the entire complex of their arsenal: armoured vehicles, heavy artillery and air force.

From the first hours of the hostilities, the adversary also targeted civilians. Schoolchildren were killed and wounded in the school yard; elderly people were viciously killed in their homes — all of them peaceful residents, including a 92-year-old woman. And it was carried out by the so-called sabotage and reconnaissance group because no regular unit of the Azeri armed forces entered any residential area. It is true that, right after this, the group was eliminated; however, this is the fact. Footage featuring this scene also appeared in the mass media yesterday. You can watch that footage and juxtapose it with the repeatedly uttered words of the leader of the neighbouring State on the protection of the rights of the people of Karabakh within "the island of tolerance — Azerbaijan".

Timely and professional actions of the Nagorno-Karabakh Defence Army allowed the entire situation to be brought under control.

Hostilities of this magnitude have not been registered since the establishment of the ceasefire in 1994. Provocative attacks of the Azeri side resumed the next morning and continue as we speak. Azerbaijan continues to target civilians, using multiple rocket launchers and mortars. After the so-called "unilateral ceasefire", the Azerbaijani armed forces continued their active military actions along the line of contact and shelled the residential areas of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Republic of Armenia, as a party to the 1994 ceasefire agreement, will continue to fully implement its obligations to ensure the security of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. Moreover, I have instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to work with Nagorno-Karabakh to elaborate an agreement on mutual military assistance. And here I would like to state what I have declared on many occasions: should military actions continue and escalate to a large scale, the Republic of Armenia will recognize the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Further escalation of the military actions may result in unpredictable and irreversible consequences, including an all-out war. It will obviously affect the security and stability not only of the South Caucasus but also of the entire European area.

Clearly, the cessation of hostilities and a peaceful resolution of the issue, in general, stem from the interests of the European States. OSCE, as a structure which plays a crucial role in preserving security in Europe, has a special role.

Regrettably, multiple warnings of the Armenian side that, sooner or later, Azerbaijan would become hostage to its own Armenophobic rhetoric and would plunge into a new military adventurism, and that, therefore, the aggressor must be contained by all possible means, fell short of desirable results. When Azerbaijan was bragging about the acquisition of arms and weaponry in profound quantities, the international community remained silent or almost silent; when statements about seeking a military solution to the problem were being made at the highest levels, the international community remained almost silent; when Azerbaijan was derailing the work of the OSCE Minsk Group and turning down the proposals to create confidence-building mechanisms, the international community again kept silent. And today, the international community is again silent as we see how Azerbaijan uses heavy artillery and bombards the peaceful population. By the way, literally minutes ago the Azeri armed forces for the first time used the heavy flamethrower system, "ognemyot" in Russian. The type is called TOS-1. Meanwhile, when the Nagorno-Karabakh Defence Army is taking countermeasures against the armed forces of Azerbaijan, which has manifold numerical superiority over Nagorno-Karabakh, they are urged to "show restraint."

I have three messages I would like you to convey to your capitals.

First, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan — not only this ministry but also obviously the speech of the President of Azerbaijan and other official sources have publicly stated, that for some reasons, which are perhaps clear to them but do not echo the logic of the so-far occurring processes in any way, Azerbaijan was the one that had initiated the offensive. According to their explanations, Azerbaijan attacked the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic to resolve problems that assumingly had to be addressed through the peaceful talks under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs. We expect all the parties concerned with regional peace to clearly demand an explanation from Baku concerning the launch of the military operations.

In recent days, many heads of State and international organizations expressed their concern over the situation and made statements calling for the establishment of peace. They cannot be effective as long as they are not directed to a specific addressee, the one who provoked the offensive, and as long as they do not foresee consequences for disregarding them. This is exactly why I refer to the international community as being silent.

Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh are in favour of hostilities being ceased and the 1994 ceasefire regime being fully respected, with all the parties returning to their initial positions and barracks as of 1 April 2016. To preserve the ceasefire, OSCE needs to come up with stabilizing measures, which, under these conditions, should primarily include the urgent introduction of the ceasefire violations investigation mechanism and a considerable increase in the monitoring capacities of

the personal representative to the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office. It is also necessary to increase the number of field assistants to the personal representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in the conflict zone so that they can record the violations.

Second, I have repeatedly stated that, to settle any conflict, especially when it is a conflict concerning the destiny of peoples fighting for their right to self-determination, it is necessary to address the cause of the conflict, and only after that to proceed to other matters stemming from that cause.

The Armenian side has never declined reasonable concessions to resolve the conflict. The OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and the ambassadors of those countries who are present here are well aware of this. But talking about them is meaningful only when the root cause of the conflict is solved and the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic is freed from the threat of being recolonized. No one can force a people to live within a State that does not reflect the aspirations and values of that people.

Third, one of the recent manifestations of the cynical behaviour of Azerbaijan was the statement of the Azerbaijani Ministry of Defence, according to which Azerbaijan unilaterally suspended the "counteroffensive" against the "enemy", owing to the humanitarian concerns and started implementing the programme of fortifying the protection of the "liberated" territories. I can assure you that Azerbaijan has not liberated any territory. At this moment, along the whole line of contact, there is only a tiny segment in the south and another tiny segment in the north, which hopefully will no longer exist by the end of this meeting. This means that Azerbaijan has made an advance of merely 200-300 metres. For every metre they have lost more than one person. It is obvious that, by this, Azerbaijan is again misleading the international community and trying to create preconditions to disguise both the hostilities it has unleashed and the further continuation thereof.

An alleged "unilateral ceasefire" is out of question, since the tripartite agreements on the ceasefire from 1994 and on the strengthening of the ceasefire regime from 1995 without time limits, signed by Azerbaijan, are in force and Azerbaijan must adhere to the letter and spirit of those documents as an international obligation and not as a gesture of goodwill. By the way, I believe that the mediators of the ceasefire have an important role to play. I think that they are also the guarantors of the preservation of the ceasefire regime. Nagorno-Karabakh is a party to those documents and Azerbaijan must start to speak directly with the authorities of Karabakh whether they like them or not. Moreover, I believe that every incident of violation of the ceasefire must be thoroughly examined and evaluated since that is the guarantee and motivation of an effective negotiation process.

As an OSCE participating State, Armenia finds it necessary to call upon all OSCE participating States to be principled in their positions. If there is a will and desire to fix the situation, effective measures have to be implemented to that end and respect of the 1994 ceasefire regime must be enforced upon Azerbaijan.

Finally, one of the OSCE participating States, Turkey, which often recalls its membership in the Minsk Group, is acting from a position of inciting a great war in the region and is explicitly encouraging the adventuristic policy of the Azerbaijani leadership. Azerbaijan is bragging about its alleged victory and Turkey congratulates it on that occasion, while the international community condemns the use of force in Nagorno-Karabakh, although only in words. Turkey is the only

country to provide unwavering support for Azerbaijani adventurism. The statements made by Ankara before and after this situation, through which this country seems to compete with Azerbaijan with its anti-Armenian stance, can form a new hotbed of tension in the region, something of which Turkey has experience in the Near East. All those who wished to see Turkey among the mediators now understand that the country, having adopted the approach of the so-called "blood-kinship security", should be completely kept away from the Karabakh conflict resolution process.

To conclude, I would like to once again thank you for being here and express my hope that my messages and concerns will be heard in your capitals for the sake of pan-European peace and security.